



Arizona Governor's Prayer Breakfast

Thursday, April 21, 2011

Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer

Thank you -- and good morning, everyone!

And, thank you, Joni, for that wonderful message.

It's truly an honor to be with you -- to be a part of your inspiring ministry -- and to hear the beautiful voices of John and Ruby.

Thank you.

It was Saturday, January Eighth.

I was in the House Chamber, rehearsing my State of the State address, for the following Monday, January 10th.

It was then we received the terrible news of the shooting in Tucson.

We were told a gunman had taken six lives, gravely injuring my friend, Gabby Giffords, as well as several other innocent people.

While we all struggled to get more news, while trying to make sense of what we DID know that day, almost without hesitation, my Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications, Paul Senseman, drew my staff together, hands were held and a prayer was offered -- asking for God's comfort and grace. For me, that was a vital step in our spiritual recovery.

I know countless prayers have been offered since that terrible day -- and continue to be offered -- for those we lost -- those who suffered -- and those who are suffering still.

And, I believe God IS listening.

I believe HIS Grace is as vast – and wondrous – and deep – as the Arizona night sky.

But, we DO ask an awful lot of God, don't we?

When Richard Nixon was a young boy, he asked his Quaker grandmother why it was that the Quakers believed in SILENT prayer.

When Quakers sat down at the dinner table, they always had SILENT grace, and often at church, they would sit in silent prayer.

The grandmother answered, "What you must understand, Richard, is that the purpose of prayer is to LISTEN to God -- not to TALK to God. The purpose of prayer is NOT to tell God what YOU want from HIM -- but to find out from God what HE wants from YOU!"

I was reminded of a story not long ago of the only survivor of a shipwreck who was washed up on a small, uninhabited island.

He prayed with great passion for God to rescue him.

Every day he scanned the horizon for help, and every day he saw nothing but the ocean.

Exhausted, he eventually managed to build a little hut out of driftwood to protect himself from the elements, and to store his few possessions.

One day, after scavenging for food, he arrived home to find his little hut engulfed in flames, with smoke rolling up to the sky.

He felt devastated, everything was lost.

Stunned with disbelief, grief, and anger -- he cried out, "GOD! How could you do this to me?"

But, early the next day, he was awakened by the sound of a ship approaching the island!

It had come to rescue him!

"How did you know I was here?" the man asked one of his rescuers.

"We saw your smoke signal," he replied.

So, it's easy to get discouraged when things are going badly, it's easy to ask too many things of God, rather than listening to what HE is asking of US.

As difficult as it is to believe sometimes, God is at work in our lives, even in the midst of our pain and suffering.

We all should remember that the next time our little hut seems to be burning to the ground, it just might be a smoke signal that summons the Grace of GOD.

Let me close by saying that because Congress has called upon our citizens to reaffirm the role of prayer in our society -- and to honor our religious diversity by recognizing annually a "National Day of Prayer," last May, I issued a proclamation declaring May 6, 2010, as the "Arizona Day of Prayer."

Well, some people didn't like that, and they filed suit to have that proclamation declared unconstitutional.

So, let me just say ...

Public calls to prayer are an honored American tradition -- going back to the days of George Washington.

Days of prayer invite Americans of every race -- background -- and creed -- to come together -- voluntarily -- to pray for guidance, wisdom and courage.

And, it's worth noting that religious faith played a large part in America's founding and history -- and Arizona's founding as well. The words on our state seal translate to "God enriches."

The lawsuit to stop our prayer proclamations is nothing more than an attempt to drive religious expression from the public square.

I intend to fight that lawsuit -- vigorously -- every step of the way!

The good news is that just last week the federal appeals court in Chicago dismissed the challenge to the President's prayer proclamations, brought by the same group challenging me.

Today, my counsel have filed a response to those challenging my prayer proclamations -- which is the first step to having their lawsuit thrown out of court.

And ... it is with great pleasure that I proclaim Thursday, May Fifth, 2011, as the next Arizona day of prayer!

Thank you, again, Joni [Johnny], for your message and your ministry.

May God bless you and your families, and our Great State of Arizona. And may God always bless and protect the United States of America. Thank you.

